

mst124 2014b vid004-320x176

HAYLEY: Once your package arrives, the first thing you have to do is check that you've got absolutely everything inside.

LIBBY: Check that everything on the contents checklist is actually in the box. If it isn't, call the warehouse, and they'll arrange to send you a replacement. The first item to look at is the MST124 guide.

HAYLEY: When your box arrives, it can look a bit daunting, but don't worry. The guide is really important. It tells you how the course is structured. It tells you how the technology works. It has suggestions on how you manage your time. And it tells you what to do first.

LIBBY: First thing to do before you start is think about where you're going to study. You'll need somewhere with some space to spread out your books, put your computer, and to store your materials when you're not using them. You may be lucky enough to have a spare room, but if not, the corner of the kitchen or the living room may be fine. The best thing is to find out what works for you.

HAYLEY: Studying maths is a bit like trying to learn how to play a musical instrument. You've got to do it. You've got to actually do the maths. You've got to sit there doing the examples.

LIBBY: Be prepared to make lots of mistakes, but that's how you learn. MST124 has been written to take students around nine hours a week, but this may vary from student to student.

HAYLEY: It helps a lot to try and make a timetable.

LIBBY: Most students find that they have to give up something in everyday life to fit this nine hours in.

HAYLEY: So you're going to have to stop doing something so that you can fit in the blocks of study.

LIBBY: So the best thing to do is plan a timetable of when you're likely to be able to study.

HAYLEY: Because then you can see when you're doing it, and just as importantly you can see when you've done it. And you can now take a nice break and have a rest and be refreshed for the next time.

LIBBY: The module website will clearly indicate what you should be doing each week. On the front page of the module website is a study planner. Follow that through, and you'll see links to the relevant assessment, to the relevant units, any computer applications you need to use.

HAYLEY: You can watch tutorial clips--

COMPUTER: And here our number is 50,629.

HAYLEY: --where you can see tutors talking you through some of the maths. And there are forums there so you can talk to other students about the maths, or indeed anything else you want to talk to the other students about.

If you can't do a question, first of all, don't worry. That's normal, and that's what maths is about. Expect to be stuck, because that's when you're learning. But don't look in the back. If you look in the back, you won't give yourself the opportunity to be confused and to think about it, and the learning might not happen.

LIBBY: Look at the question again. It may become clear. If not, have a short break. You might find the answer comes to you when you're not concentrating on it too hard.

HAYLEY: Look at the website. There might be some other resources there that you can use, might be a tutorial clip going through a similar question. And you can look in the forums. There might be other students talking about the same question. And don't forget your tutor.

The computer algebra system is nothing to worry about. It's a piece of software that you put onto your computer that makes your computer act a bit like a glorified calculator. There's a computer algebra guide that takes you through the whole process step by step.

LIBBY: Face to face tutorials are very informal and nothing to be worried about.

HAYLEY: The tutors are very careful not to put anyone on the spot. They're not at all like lessons or lectures. They're very informal, and it's just a chance for you to talk to other students and talk to your tutor and learn lots of maths.

LIBBY: Online tutorials are carried out in a virtual room. You'll see a link from the MST124 website. Click on that, and it will launch you into the room.

HAYLEY: There's a whiteboard, and there's a text box that you can type in. And there are icons. There are smiley faces for when you're happy. There's a confused icon for when you get confused.

And you can talk to the other students, or you can use the text box to write messages. You can draw on the whiteboard, and so can your tutor.

LIBBY: TMAs are tutor-marked assignments. There will be several of these to submit throughout MST124. And you'll find that they're a good way of checking your progress throughout the course. They'll be marked by your tutor, and they'll provide you with detailed feedback that's personal to you.

HAYLEY: It's really important to make the most of this opportunity, because it's your chance to get really individualised feedback from your tutor.

LIBBY: It's very important to look carefully at this feedback and take it into consideration for the rest of your work.

HAYLEY: You don't need to worry about typing them. You can if you want to, but you can also hand write them, because typing maths is difficult and takes lots of time. And you want to use that time to learn the maths, not to learn how to type maths.

LIBBY: The most important thing to remember is you're not on your own as an OU student. Call your tutor if you have any concerns.

HAYLEY: Your tutor is there to help you. So don't worry about it. If you get stuck, you can contact your tutor. And now, go and look at that MST124 guide.